5: Kemp E-4, 5 (1926-1933)1935
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The Eastern Slavs

had a sacred tree to which they sacrificed and where they made and registered vows, which recalls the South Slav custom of *zavetine* when the tree's roots are sometimes sprinkled with blood or a common meal is partaken of beneath its branches. The Vlahs of the Timok district in spring kill a lamb under the village tree and allow the blood to run into a hole dug at its roots. In the Bulgarian life of St Theodosius (from the Greek of the fourteenth century) a certain Theodorit, a follower of the Massalian (?) heretic Akindin, set up an oak-tree cult at Trnovo, where people worshipped and sacrificed sheep to the tree for the sake of their health.[1] An old South Slav gloss reads: 'Not only should the forms of idols be destroyed and razed and altars, that is temples, dug up, but no trace of idolatrous worship remain in any place or in forests or in oak-tree groves or in trees....'

Vuk mentions a ghost (*sjenovito*) tree at Grbalje, which, if anyone cut, he will sicken to the end of his days. He should therefore with the same axe cut off a hen's head, holding the bird over the stump of the tree.

When a sheep or goat died, if it had had young, the body was hung by Hercegovinian shepherds on a tree, and left there to decay, since this prevented more deaths in the flock, and also encouraged the fertility of the tree.

The legend of sacrifice to a pestilential dragon or demon is universal, and there are grounds for thinking that human sacrifices to lake and river demons existed amongst the South Slavs to purify a village or district. This is borne out by numerous local traditions of the kind.

In Old Serbia the guardian of lakes is believed to be a bull, to whom an offering of money must be thrown before beginning the sheep washing, and on this occasion the shepherds fire guns. There are innumerable local customs of blood, plant, money and grain sacrifices to streams for the sake of cattle or for rain and fertility. Sometimes images are thrown into the water or simply green boughs, and although these

[1] *Vide Žitie i Žizn prepodob. Otca nashgo... Theodorija* in *Činie* of *Imp. Obščestvo Istoriji i Drevnosti Rossii*, 1 (1860).